



and Terry Scott celebrate as Stewart Atkins nets an apparent equaliser in extra time. But the effort was disallowed for off-side.

ate penalty

saves Blues

By MICHAEL KNOX: Wycombe 2, Hungerford 2 (aet)



don shows as Howard Kennedy

that earned Wycombe a reprieve.

WYCOMBE seemed doomed to their second defeat in three seasons against Hungerford, when they trailed 2-1 with just 60 seconds of extra-time remaining in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup final at Marlow on Monday.

They had already had one equalising attempt disallowed and Hungerford were on the brink of the greatest moment in their short history. But both teams and fans reckoned without the brilliance of Mick Holifield.

Receiving the ball deep inside his own half, Holifield used his searing speed and side-step to beat numerous defenders on a devastating 70 yard run, which took him into the Hungerford penalty area.

He was just about to set

himself up for a shot, when Chris Gwynn brought him down with a desperate lunge inside the area. There was no doubt about the penalty and Blues' spot-kick ace Howard Kennedy struck it sweetly to save his side from an embarrassing defeat.

So Hungerford, who defeated Wycombe two years ago in one of the biggest upsets in Blues' history, were denied the chance of a repeat in the final itself and must now replay at Slough this Thursday, kick-off 7.30 pm.

Even the most ardent Wycombe supporter must have felt some disappointment for Hungerford, who were denied their moment of glory, but in truth Wycombe deserved to draw, even though they only started to play when they were behind.

Playing their third game in four days, Wycombe took it easy in a quiet first half. The hard pitch, grassless down the middle, made close control awkward and the crowd of about 1,200 had lit-

tle to cheer in the opening stages.

Thanks to an effective offside trap and some strong play by centre-half Paul Duffy, Hungerford kept their opponents at bay.

At the other end John Maskell was troubled by a 50 yard free-kick by Duffy which he had to tip over the bar.

Just before half-time Wycombe's shortage of fit players — they only had 12 fit men for this tie — was worsened when Steve Long suffered a damaged nose in a collision.

Blood poured from the cut and although Long resumed after the interval he was eventually replaced midway through the second half, and after the match went to the hospital for an X-ray.

His replacement was Graham Pearce, a member of the current Wycombe Youth side, who showed a number of neat touches on the left side of the field. However it was not an easy baptism because three minutes before he came on Hungerford took the lead.

The Blues' defence failed to clear the ball quickly and centre-forward Andy Young seized on the chance to stab the ball in from close range.

Suddenly realising they could be beaten, Wycombe lifted their game and began to create chances. Pearce saw a shot blocked on the line and then Steve Hardwick bundled the ball into the net. However, his celebrations were cut short when it was disallowed for offside.

Just when it looked as though Blues would never score, Atkins popped home the equaliser after Kennedy's free-kick from the left had been headed to his feet.

Hectic

In those final hectic minutes of ordinary time, Wycombe could have won the match three times over. Both Pearce and Scott headed inches over the bar while goalkeeper Crocker saved Holifield's flick at the second attempt.

So the match went to extra-time and surely Wanderers' greater experience and fitness would prove decisive? But in the first period Blues slipped back into a lower gear and did not threaten.

Then to everyone's surprise, Hungerford regained the lead following a bad error by Maskell. He dropped a cross from the right under no real pressure.

In the scramble that followed the ball was pushed over the line. From the stand it looked as though Evans had produced the final touch but it was Young who claimed the goal much to the delight of the noisy Hungerford fans, who certainly produced the loudest cheers on the day.

Once again Wycombe were stirred into action and Atkins appeared to have equalised almost immediately. But an alert linesman had spotted another offside and their last chance appeared to have gone.

But Holifield, whose work-rate was in marked contrast to that of some of his colleagues, refused to give in and helped spoil the premature Hungerford celebrations.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, R. Davies, K. Mead, S. Hardwick, D. Evans, S. Atkins, M. Holifield, S. Long (sub G. Pearce 67 mins), H. Kennedy, T. Scott, Sub C. Way (not used).

HUNTERFORD: S. Crocker; G. Smith (sub G. McKay, D. Reilly, W. Angell, P. Duffy, D. McMahon, M. Farmilo (sub S. Eighteen 90 mins), C. Gwynn, A. Young, J. Ashton, N. Loveless.

Referee: J. G. Mangan (Slough).
Half-time: 0-0. **Full-time:** 1-1.
Scorers: Wycombe — Atkins (80 mins), Kennedy (pen) (119); Hungerford — Young (64, 108).